

Legislative Monthly Newsletter

March 2020

Irish Political Developments



[Government formation talks between Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil continue at slow pace](#)



[Concern mounting as the Oireachtas will not be able to pass legislation](#)

As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, please continue to consult the [Chambers Ireland website](#) where the most up-to-date information and [Department links](#) can be found.

Useful links

- [Covid-19: Resources for Business](#)
- [Business Resources for HR Guidance](#)
- [Resources from the HSE, the Department of Health and other Government Departments](#)

Two significant pieces of legislation have passed through the Oireachtas to “provide a robust statutory underpinning for the State’s response to the COVID-19 crisis”:

Health Preservation and Protection and other Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Bill 2020

This [Bill](#) provides extraordinary measures and safeguards to prevent, minimise, limit or slow the risk of persons being infected” and links its necessity to “constitutional duty of the State to respect and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate the rights of citizens to life and to bodily integrity”.

These powers are intended to continue in operation until the 9th November 2020 but can be extended if the government consider it in the public interest. Any order to extend these powers must be laid before each House of the Oireachtas, either of which can annul it within 21 days.

Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (Covid-19) Bill 2020.

This Omnibus [Bill](#) gives the Government extensive emergency powers to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and mitigate economic collapse.

It provides for temporary income support schemes by contributing to wage costs to allow employers to continue paying their employees.

Once enacted, the legislation will also provide for a three-month cessation of evictions and rent increases, but this time frame can be extended by the Government if it considers it in the public interest.

The Oireachtas can annul any such extension within 21 days.

In other news...

→ **Press Releases for Chambers Ireland in response to the COVID-19 Crisis can be found [here](#).**

→ **The results of the first Chambers Ireland COVID-19 Business Impact Survey can be found [here](#).**

European Political Developments



[Summary of the European Commission's response to Coronavirus crisis to date](#)



[Draft text of the Agreement on the New Partnership with the United Kingdom](#)

Coronavirus updates

Response of some EU Institutions

Measures taken include:

- The European Commission has relaxed its [State Aid](#) rules with the introduction of a [Temporary Framework](#) which introduces five categories of measures designed to help member states to support businesses facing a sudden shortage or unavailability of liquidity as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The [European Central Bank](#) (ECB) has announced a €750bn [Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme](#) until the end of the year, in addition to the €120bn they committed to on 12 March.
- The [European Parliament](#) approved three urgent proposals: the [Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative](#) (€37bn); an extension of the [EU Solidarity Fund](#) (€800m); and a [temporary suspension of EU rules on airport slots](#).
- The relaxing of fiscal discipline rules and the activation of the general escape clause of the [Stability and Growth Pact](#) that Member States limit national budget deficits to 3% of GDP, thereby providing them with greater budgetary flexibility.
- Creation of the first ever [common European reserve of emergency medical equipment](#) worth €80m, 90% of which will be financed by the Commission.
- Publication of guidelines on establishing a [common EU framework for screening foreign investment](#), designed to protect Europe's critical assets and economic sovereignty in key areas such as healthcare, pharma, medical devices and research.

EU to provide €30 million for struggling Irish SMEs

The European Commission is advancing a payment of €30 million to Ireland in structural funds to deal with the Covid-19 crisis. Ireland can also hold on to a further €4m of unspent structural funds from 2019.

→ See the Commission's letter to Ministers Paschal Donohoe and Regina Doherty [here](#).

New EU guidelines to ensure continuous flow of goods across EU

To ensure that EU-wide supply chains continue to operate, Member States are requested to designate, without delay, all the [relevant internal border-crossing points on the trans-European transport network \(TEN-T\)](#) as 'green lane' border crossings. The green lane border crossings should be open to all freight vehicles, whatever goods they are carrying. Crossing the border, including any checks and health screening, should not take more than 15 minutes.

→ More on this can be found [here](#).

In other news...

[EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement \(EPA\): Business Survey](#)

The EU is carrying out a survey to collect feedback on the impact of the EU-Japan EPA on EU businesses and to gather information on any market access challenges that EU companies face when entering the Japanese market. The EU will use the results of this survey to improve the business climate for EU companies operating in Japan. Deadline for completing the survey is 30 April 2020.

For all EU public consultations, please consult this [webpage](#) as some of these may be of interest to you and your members.